

## As Native students settle into distance learning for the school year, Partnership With Native Americans continues to ensure mentoring and support



Pictured: Myah and Shawnie, both recipients of American Indian Education Fund four-year scholarships, are completing the school year with an eye to today and tomorrow.(Photo: Partnership With Native Americans)

Press Pool

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Students' aim: Prioritize education even as they face the unknowns in a COVID world

*News Release*

*Partnership With Native Americans*

Disruption of educational opportunity is one more way the coronavirus is impacting tribes nationwide. In early March, universities, trade schools, and even tribal colleges across the U.S. began a transition to distance learning to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on campus. But distance learning is not as easily within reach for thousands of Native American students. Many don't have easy access to Internet and computers like the thousands of U.S. workers who recently began working from home. For some, the dream of a college education is threatened by the serious digital divide in Indian Country.

Partnership With Native Americans awards scholarships to Native American students through its American Indian Education Fund (AIEF) program. Knowing they would face overcrowded housing, costly Internet connections or long distances to access Internet in public places, many of our American Indian Education Fund scholars had to vacate their dorm rooms and in some cases leave their jobs, only to find themselves in

less student-friendly environments. Partnership With Native Americans is continuing to ensure mentoring of these students, as well as scholars like Myah and Shawnie who have Internet access and are prioritizing their studies even as they are looking ahead and wondering about their respective futures in a COVID world.

**Myah Red Horse** returned home – 360 miles from the University of South Dakota – to balance study and self-care, both of which are so different now. A junior pursuing a Native Studies degree with a minor in Political Science, Myah shares about her experience. *“I am thankful I was able to come home to finish the semester, but unfortunately, I am still paying rent so that has been the most stressful part of this whole transition. Remote learning has been stressful because I would much rather be present in class than trying to teach myself online while also doing my part at home. I have a lot of concerns about being able to focus, do well during finals and complete the rest of the coursework this semester. I currently have a 3.95 GPA and that is important for me to keep up – but I am really worried about what the future holds for me and it has become a huge distraction. I usually work at the bank to pay my rent and other bills during the summer and fall semester, but my family does not want me working... they are afraid I might bring home COVID to my elderly grandmother. My mom keeps telling me not to worry, but if I cannot work, I don't know how I am going to go back for my last year of school.”*

**Shawnie DeTavernier** has experienced similar issues with *“carving out time for everything I need to accomplish while trying to stay sane in this new normal.”* A college senior pursuing a bachelor's in English at a college in Wyoming, she is also faced with the reality of graduating during a pandemic. Like so many seniors (in high school and college), the culmination of Shawnie's higher education experience is not what she or her family ever could have imagined. *“I am scheduled to graduate on May 16... COVID-19 has impacted my commencement plans because my university is having a virtual graduation ceremony.”* She takes these changes in stride as her greater concerns are *“the health of my family... and uncertainty about what comes after graduation.”*

To learn more about American Indian Education Fund scholarships, visit [www.aiefprogram.org](http://www.aiefprogram.org).

To help the tribes during the pandemic, visit [www.nativepartnership.org/COVID](http://www.nativepartnership.org/COVID).

### **About Partnership With Native Americans**

Partnership With Native Americans is a nonprofit committed to championing hope for a brighter future for Native Americans living on remote, geographically isolated and impoverished reservations. Established in 1990, Partnership With Native Americans collaborates with reservation programs to serve immediate needs and support long-term solutions for strong, self-sufficient Native American communities, improving the lives of 250,000 Native Americans annually. Follow Partnership With Native Americans on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#), or visit [www.nativepartnership.org](http://www.nativepartnership.org).



(Image: Partnership With Native Americans)